

FIELD TRAINING POLICE RECRUITS

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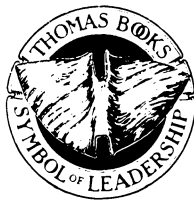
Developing, Improving, and Operating
a Field Training Program

By

JAMES T. HAIDER, B.S., M.A.

With a Foreword by

Jerry D. Bratcher



CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER
Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.

Published and Distributed Throughout the World by

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER

2600 South First Street

Springfield, Illinois 62794-9265

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ISBN 0-398-05678-1 (cloth)

ISBN 0-398-06366-4 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 90-30343

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*Printed in the United States of America
SC-R-3*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Haider, James T.

Field training police recruits : developing, improving, and
operating a field training program / by James T. Haider.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-398-05678-1. — ISBN 0-398-36366-4 (pbk.)

1. Police training—United States. 2. Police patrol—United
States. I. Title.

HV8142.H35 1990

350.74'068'3—dc20

90-30343

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FOREWORD

In today's well managed police departments, there is a strong emphasis on training to develop a highly skilled, efficiently operated organization. Police departments spend substantial sums of money to train police officers in legal issues and proper police practices. We invest countless hours in the development of regulations, policies, and procedures to guide the actions of our police officers. And yet, these considerable investments of time and money can be wasted when the field training officer says, "Forget everything you learned. I will show you how we really do it here."

Conversely, the competent field training officer can complement and enhance training and department policies. The knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and attitudes instilled in the rookie by the field training officer establishes the foundation upon which the new officer builds a successful career. The impact of the FTO on the new officer is, indeed, profound.

Field Training Police Recruits does not represent a parochial view of the subject, but rather a detailed survey that has drawn from some of the most successful field training programs from throughout the country. This provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of the *state of the art*.

This text offers the law enforcement field a reference which provides worthwhile, knowledgeable, and illuminating guidelines to the Field Training Officer.

The author is uniquely qualified to discuss Recruit Field Training because he has a varied and substantial background of more than a decade of functioning as a field trainer, extensive teaching experience on the subject, and, in recent years, managing the FTO program.

This thorough treatment of police recruit field training will be a valuable tool for police chiefs, supervisors, and field training officers. It will be particularly valuable to administrators and field training officers

of smaller law enforcement agencies who have had limited opportunities for formalized training in this important area.

Jerry D. Bratcher
Chief of Police
Palatine, Illinois Police Department

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the country today there are many successful Field Training Programs. These programs can be found in small towns and in large metropolitan police departments. Perhaps your own agency has a Field Training Program in place from which you are enjoying success.

This book examines the programs found in several medium-sized law enforcement agencies and in a large city department. These programs are not unique in themselves. Most Police Field Training Programs take the best ideas of several agencies and blend them together to form their own program, tailored to fit the individual department's needs.

Police work is similar no matter where one looks. Law enforcement agencies around the country and throughout the world are involved in traffic control and quelling disturbances, to keeping domestic peace and apprehending the criminal offender. Many of the generic functions of law enforcement can be instilled in the recruit through academy training, however, the idiosyncrasies of each individual agency must be taught at the department level and the best manner devised for preparing the recruit is through the close, one-on-one instruction of the Field Training Program.

The ideas presented in this book are by no means the entire invention of the author. The ideas presented are the compilation of sharing Field Training with other law enforcement professionals interested in developing better, more well prepared officers for street assignment. This book will not provide the reader with all of the answers. This book will provide the reader with ideas that have worked in Field Training. It will present a program based on the now widely implemented "San Jose Model" of which so much has been said and from which so much has been learned.

This book is for the officer assigned to the recruit. The Field Training Officer will find ideas in this book which may help him in his task of preparing the recruit to be an officer whom he may one day depend

upon for effective back-up, and who is a solid contributing member of the department's team.

This book is also intended for the police executive who may or may not have a Field Training Program in place. Perhaps the reader is a chief in a small or medium-sized agency and has been considering implementing or improving his Field Training Program. Here the chief will find ideas which he may implement or take action on to improve the training of his agency's recruits.

The main purpose of this book is to introduce the reader to the Field Training Officer. Usually the Field Training Officer attends a school or seminar introducing him to Field Training. He is generally provided with a notebook and volumes of information which collect dust after the initial training session. This book can be a resource in the hands of the Field Trainer and easily slipped into his briefcase as he hits the street with his recruit.

This book is not designed to replace quality instruction in Field Training which is provided throughout the country in a number of worthwhile programs. The trained Field Training Officer will find this book a tool, and the law enforcement executive will find it a guide and a source of information for change and improvement.

The four programs which the author makes mention of in this book are solid well developed programs. The author does not wish any agency that has a successful Field Training Program to feel slighted for not being mentioned—only that the reader keep an open mind and learn from sharing the successes of others and to share his own ideas with you, the reader, for the betterment of the police service.

In the author's experience of teaching veteran officers the Field Training Program, he has been asked many times why there is no easily read and useful book on the topic. It is the author's intention that these pages be that book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would never have been undertaken or completed without the help of others. I want to thank Chief Jerry Bratcher of the Palatine, Illinois Police Department for the opportunity to be a field training officer and to oversee the Department's program. I also want to thank Chief Bratcher for kindly contributing the Foreword to this book.

Palatine's Sergeant Frank Fenneman deserves a word of thanks for his assistance over the years in helping me to develop and administer Palatine's Program. Palatine Police Sergeant Mark Fleischhauer deserves thanks too for his work in FTO lesson plan development.

I also wish to thank Professor Steven Cox of Western Illinois University for guiding me in the initial stages of this project and for his encouragement.

Robert L. Allen, formerly of the San Jose, California Police Department deserves a great deal of credit for beginning formal field training and for the insight he provided to me on the early days of field training. I also wish to thank Phyllis Trussler of the San Jose Police Department for her help.

The following individuals deserve thanks for permitting me the use of their agency's materials in this project: Director James P. Hill and Sergeant Robert G. Friis of the Fridley, Minnesota Police Department; Chief Fred Stoecker and Lieutenant George Carpenter of the Wilmette, Illinois Police Department.

A special thanks to Deputy Chief Richard G. Overman of the Orlando, Florida Police Department for his insights and assistance over the years in field training programs, training seminars for FTOs, and the use of some of Orlando's materials in this work.

Finally, a big thanks goes out to Cyndee Nicholson for bearing with me through this project. Her skills at typing and preparing the manuscript were invaluable. Her patience in bearing with me through this project is very much appreciated.

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FIELD TRAINING POLICE RECRUITS

Chapter 1

WHAT IS FIELD TRAINING?

To understand what Field Training is all about one must have some understanding of where police work has been. In the not too distant past it was frequently the norm for a person hired as a police officer to simply pin on a badge, strap on a gun belt, and wade into the streets to fight crime. Progress was made, however, and recruit officers were placed with experienced officers who would show them the ropes. Generally, the recruit would ride along with the seasoned veteran until, in the veteran's opinion, the rookie was ready to go it alone. In some agencies this is how recruits are still prepared. It was not unheard of for the experienced officer to tell the rookie, "Forget what you learned in the academy, kid. I'll show you how it's done on the street." When an agency was lucky, recruits would develop into good officers. When the agency was not so fortunate, it was frequently saddled with an officer who would be retired in place and only do what was necessary to get by. *A ticket a day keeps the sergeant away* mentality developed among more than a few officers.

Some departments developed a facsimile of a field training program. Rookies would be assigned to a good street officer, but he would often lack the skills necessary to teach the recruit the job. Some police agencies expected any senior officer to take a recruit officer and in a certain, often unspecified period of time, have the recruit fully trained. In many cases no training was provided to the training officer and no instructional curriculum was established for them to follow.

Another problem is the training officer selected to *look over* the rookie may not be the appropriate role model for a young eager officer. Veteran officers who have had recruits assigned to them have been known to show them the ropes, and where they could obtain the traditional *police discount*. Many early police training programs also provided no authority for the training officer to evaluate the recruit or to direct the recruit's activities on the street during the training period.

There are other problems found in loosely organized Field Training

Programs. A partner relationship between the recruit and his training officer tends to develop over a period of time. A training officer who considers the recruit his partner has a difficult time objectively evaluating the recruit. The police subculture has also been known in the past to have a code of silence. Unproductive and undesirable officers would find that their fellow officers would look the other way, and in many cases carry them through situations the inadequate officers could not properly handle. Negative peer evaluation has also been discouraged in police work because of the *us against them* syndrome that has developed within the police subculture. Officers would sometimes support one another due to the false impression they were not supported by their community.

As a result of these problems, police work over the years has collected a number of losers. It is a cycle that can be broken. Generally, poor initial training leads to a lack of confidence, which in turn leads to negligent admission and retention. Therefore, to develop more qualified street officers, a firm foundation must be built upon which the recruit can grow and develop into a qualified officer.

Police departments today must learn to do more with less. As the 1980s demonstrated, cutback management forced upon public agencies many duties they had no part of in the past. Police agencies today perform such a wide variety of duties that an officer must be well versed in a myriad of activities. Officers today are involved in everything from pursuing illegal drug distributors and drunk drivers to picking up stray dogs and opening vehicles for citizens who lock in their keys. Local governments are asking their police departments to do more, frequently with less resources than the departments would like. A police department today must have a training program to prepare the recruit to accomplish all the community expects of them.

Field training today must be an extension of the selection process. Departments spend a great amount of time and resources choosing the best candidates for the position of police officer. The selection process of many agencies include: written examinations, physical agility testing, an interview process, psychological testing, and polygraph examinations. When a recruit doesn't measure up during the training period, it can be difficult for a police administrator to admit that an individual who has successfully completed the initial screening process and the academy does not measure up and must be dismissed. The choice is one of keeping a poorly trained and ineffective officer on the street for twenty years or more, or dismissing him early in his career. It is not only a

service to the community to dismiss an officer who doesn't measure up and will not be able to deliver the service required, but it is a service to the individual as well. There is no reason for allowing an officer to muddle through a career in which he will not do well nor find any satisfaction and fulfillment.

If an agency concludes that a recruit does not measure up, does it have the documentation to show the officer is deficient? If a police administrator is asking himself this question, he does not have an adequate nor properly run Field Training Program. Can the agency demonstrate that the recruit was given the proper training? Will the agency be able to show the efforts put forth to train the officer, or will it be forced to rely on the unqualified opinion of one veteran officer who rode with the recruit for an unspecified period of time? A solid Field Training Program is built on documentation, showing what the recruit officer is taught and how well he has responded to the training.

The police executive who desires to have a thorough selection and training process must have a program that is standardized. Field training programs must not only evaluate police recruits but train them too.

In order to have a training program one must determine what the job of a police officer entails. Once it is determined what the agency wants the recruit officer to be able to do, it must decide how it will teach the recruit and how it will evaluate what progress the recruit is making.

Senior officers selected as training officers need to be well versed in the field training program and be educated in how to train the recruit and how to evaluate the recruit's understanding of the material and the skills performed by the recruit.

Field training, in essence, is a test. It is a test of whether or not the recruit can actually perform the job he has been hired to do. The field training program test is valid because of its content. Simply put, the content of the program is the job and the job is the test the recruit must pass. The recruit officer is not being asked to perform the job of a firefighter, he is being asked to do the job of a police officer in actual field conditions. If he is unable to perform the job, he fails the test and is dismissed.

A department organizing a field training program should be certain that it has a complete and thorough job-task analysis of a police officer's job, coupled with a solid position description. Without knowing exactly what the officer is called on to perform, there is no way of knowing what the test entails. When the job-task analysis is complete the agency has a

foundation upon which to build its program. The department will know what it has to teach the officer and on what the officer needs to be evaluated.

Through a sound, well-founded Field Training Program, a department is investing time and experience in its richest resource, its officers. Knowing what knowledge and skills the officer needs to perform and teaching him how to accomplish his task is what field training is all about. Providing the officer with the knowledge and tools, and providing the Field Training Officer (FTO) with the skill to teach and evaluate are the foundations for an efficient and successful department.

Safe productive FTOs who display a positive attitude toward the department's goals will help to instill in the recruit support for the department's management and policies. The FTOs will also benefit by learning and practicing supervisory skills. It is not uncommon for the sergeants and other line supervisors on a department to have been FTOs earlier in their careers.

FTOs should be given ownership of the recruits and the Field Training Program. FTOs will develop further through participative management.

The FTOs have the final word on how a recruit is progressing. No one else on the department is actively serving and watching the recruit's every move in the field. When recruits need further assistance and remedial training, the FTOs must develop action plans for dealing with the problems.

Should a recruit officer not meet acceptable standards, a well documented, standardized Field Training Program will protect the Department against negligent retention or admission. The agency will have the documentation readily available to demonstrate why the recruit has not measured up. The department will be able to clearly show the effort they made to develop the recruit into a good officer.